



We're Dreaming of a Green Christmas



Last year, Transition St Albans asked its members how we could make Christmas more sustainable. Here are your answers. There are loads of different ideas here; no-one will do everything, but everyone can do something.

Happy Christmas from everyone at TSA!

Trees and Decorations

- 🌿 If you buy decorations, buy ones made from wood or other natural materials
- 🌿 Buy low energy LEDs or solar lights if you need new ones
- 🌿 Find a large branch and decorate it, rather than a tree
- 🌿 Make your own decorations (there are lots of ideas on-line) i.e. dried oranges, or biscuits. Use the little trays from your mince pies. Raid your recycling box!
- 🌿 Buy a living tree with roots in a pot, then keep it in the garden during the year. Remember to water it well.
- 🌿 Make your own wreaths using plants from the garden

Cards

- › Buy charity cards not commercial ones
- › Buy cards made from recycled materials, and then recycle them!
- › Use eCards or email. Buy an Oxfam Good Gift (or similar) with the money saved
- › Deliver local cards on foot or bike
- › Don't stick down the envelopes, then it's easier to reuse them
- › Recycle postage stamps at the post office

Gifts you can make

- Chocolates, biscuits, vinegars (there are lots of ideas online)
- Spirits with foraged fruits
- Chutneys and jams
- Personalised calenders
- A book of your favourite recipes
- Sewing and knitting

Gifts that you buy

- Give events / tickets / your time / subscriptions not objects
- Buy second hand from charity shops and eBay (especially for young kids ... they just don't care!)
- Give "good gifts" like Oxfam Unwrapped and the Woodland Trust trees
- Shop locally from independent shops, like the craft shop in town, and school fairs
- Think about the embedded energy in a gift; is it made in China and shipped here? Is it made of plastic? Buy things that last.
- Buy edible, wearable and/or FairTrade products (try Oxfam and the farmers' market)
- Look for presents which don't need electricity
- Check the energy efficiency if buying electrical goods
- Can last year's unwanted gifts be given to someone?!
- Get a gift receipt, so the gift can be swapped if unwanted

Wrapping and packaging

- Turn last year's Christmas cards into this year's gift tags or gift boxes
- Wrap parcels in brown paper and use pretty ribbon or potato prints to brighten it
- Wrap parcels in newspaper and ribbon or rafia
- Use string, ribbon and raffia instead of sellotape
- Use decorative bags and boxes that are reusable
- Keep hold of useful boxes and bags during December to help with wrapping
- Have a treasure hunt instead of wrapping paper
- Save the wrapping paper to use again
- On Christmas Day, have separate bin bags / boxes ready to recycle paper and card in, and another bag for general rubbish. Do it straight away!

Food and drink – what & where to buy

- à Buy veg from a local grower e.g. Carpenters in Sandridge Road
- à Try and buy British food, the more local the better
- à Don't drink bottled water
- à Grow some of your own; parsnips and carrots can be harvested in December
- à Make your own mulled wine

Food and drink – planning meals

- 🥕 Plan some meals, so you don't buy too much
- 🥕 But don't plan too many meals, because there will be lots of leftovers
- 🥕 Plan to use seasonal veg
- 🥕 Plan some rabbit or venison; seasonal British meats that are low energy to produce
- 🥕 Substitute some veg dishes for meat dishes (try <http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/content/recipes/vegetarian/vegetarian-christmas/>)

Leftovers

- 🍲 Use leftovers in bubble and squeak
- 🍲 Serve left over Christmas pudding with hot custard
- 🍲 Make stock from the bones etc
- 🍲 Try <http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/content/recipes/favourites/leftovers/>

Don't waste energy

- 💡 Make full use of the oven when it is on
- 💡 Cut down on decorative lights
- 💡 Have rechargeable batteries ready on Christmas day for gifts that need them
- 💡 Go out for a walk, your house feels warm when you get home!
- 💡 If you have a woodburner, ask neighbours for wood

Travel and transport

- ✓ Buy warm enough clothing that you can still walk in cold weather
- ✓ The Trainline website is good for train timetables
- ✓ Offer to share your car with friends, and ask to share
- ✓ Or just give the car the week off

Involving friends, family, and neighbours

- J Send a card to a neighbour who you wouldn't normally
- J Put the word round about a Boxing Day football match at the local park (and then play!) Or maybe a Boxing Day walk.
- J Arrange a baking circle; you each make a big batch of one cake/pudding and then give some to each person in the circle
- J Swap decorations with friends rather than buying new ones
- J Invite neighbours around over the holidays, or agree a walk to a local pub and invite others to come along.
- J Get children involved; they love helping with making decorations, cards, gift tags, food preparation, even making a meal.
- J Make the Christmas pudding together (stir up Sunday)
- J Play more games together, a little less TV
- J Go for local walks (around St Albans there is Verulum Park, Heartwood Forest, the Wick, Gorambury, Childwickbury, Redbourn Mill, etc!)
- J Do something together locally, like the Abbey Theatre's Christmas play, a carol concert or church service.

And finally, question "the rules"

- ? Make it your own festival, start your own traditions
- ? Talk to your family about what they want Christmas to be like
- ? Agree with your family rules that work for your family
- ? Ask people (nicely!) if they really want a gift
- ? Tell people (nicely!) if you don't want a gift
- ? Ask people if they are just as happy with something second-hand
- ? Agree price limits
- ? Discuss shared buying
- ? Make more of the meal vegetarian; do you really like turkey?!